

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) today introduced the Reuniting Families Act in the Senate and House of Representatives to ensure that the immigration system emphasizes family reunification in its distribution of entry visas. The bill is endorsed by the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), which Rep. Honda chairs.

Four million potential immigrants are currently stuck in the entry backlog, many of whom are family members of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents and are ready to help play vital roles in the U.S. economy and in American communities. Among other provisions, the legislation would direct thousands of unused visas from previous years to close family members of U.S. citizens and legal residents, reclassify spouses and children of legal residents as immediate family and would raise the per-country cap for visas from seven percent to ten percent.

“We need to focus on the families. After all, family reunification is the bedrock of our immigration system – it upholds American values and reinforces our economy,” said Senator Menendez. “Families are at the core of the American community. By making sure that we can reunite U.S. citizens and legal permanent resident with their parents, husbands, wives, sons or daughters, we can help promote safe and stable communities and the values that this nation was built upon. In addition, family members boost our economy with their willingness to work hard, with their propensity to pool resources to start small businesses and with their ability to help care for elderly, infirmed or infant relatives.”

“We have an immigration system right now that penalizes families,” said Rep. Honda. “Family values start with family unity and we need to put these values back into our immigration policy. This bill ensures that children and their parents, husbands and wives, get a chance to live the American dream together. This bill is right for our economy, right for our communities and right for hundreds of thousands of families.”

American citizens wait 22 years to reunite with their brothers and sisters from the Philippines, and 11 years if their siblings are from China or India. It can take 16 years to reunite with unmarried sons and daughters from Mexico.

The Reuniting Families Act supports the reunification of immigrant and American families by:

- Recapturing unused and unclaimed visas due to bureaucratic delay
- Reclassifying lawful permanent resident spouses and children as “immediate relatives” and exempting them from numerical caps on family immigration
- Increasing per country limits from 7% to 10% so that nations with a higher demand for workers can better equip the American economy with talent
- Allowing families to reunite despite the death of a petitioner
- Recognizing the sacrifices of our military by exempting children of World War II Filipino veterans from numerical caps; and
- Allowing family members to reunite despite bars to reentry

###

The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac> .